

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Gauthier Industries Inc

Minnesota Technology Inc.

Cutting The Clutter Improves Company's Bottom Line

Client Profile:

Gauthier Industries, Inc., was founded in the 1940's to provide metalwork to medical industries. Over the years, the company has evolved into a full-service, versatile provider of metal parts. Gauthier uses state-of-the-art equipment to provide stampings, sheet-metal fabrications and enclosures made to customer order. It also provides engineering services, powder coating and assembly to its customers, who operate in a wide variety of industries, including agriculture and medicine. Gauthier is committed to quality. The firm operates under an ISO 9000: 2000 umbrella. Most of its 80 employees working in its 104,000 square foot facility have been trained in lean manufacturing techniques. Gauthier contacted MTI for assistance.

Situation:

Gauthier has worked with Minnesota Technology, Inc. (MTI), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for several years to improve its manufacturing processes. Following the training of about 90 percent of employees in lean manufacturing basics, the company's quality improvement steering committee worked with MTI on a value-stream mapping process. The process indicated that improvements could be made in several areas of the shop floor. Because Gauthier works for dozens of clients and does thousands of different projects each year, some areas of the shop floor had grown cluttered over time. The assembly area was particularly cluttered, and assembly workers reported that they sometimes spent 20 to 45 minutes searching for tools or parts before they could begin a job.

Solution:

To improve work flow and decrease set-up time, Gauthier's steering committee scheduled a 5S Kaizan event for the assembly area. MTI business consultant, Mike Braml, assisted with planning and carrying out the event. Eight employees participated in the event, which involved removing and red-tagging all materials from the area, organizing tools and parts in an accessible fashion, clearing away unnecessary equipment and trash, cleaning and painting the assembly area and establishing a regular schedule to maintain the organization of the area. Despite some initial resistance from assembly employees, the change in workplace organization was dramatic. Morale has improved and efficiency increased significantly.

Results:

- * Organized workplace.
- * Reduced set-up time by 50 percent.
- * Reduced lead time and work in process inventory.
- * Improved employee morale.
- * Awarded \$3 million contract because of outstanding lean manufacturing program.

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Testimonial:

"Innovation, adaptability and a strong work ethic have been key to Gauthier's longevity. Minnesota Technology has been a big help as we take our manufacturing operations to the next level. With MTI's help, we expect to be around another 60 years."

David Kocer, President